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President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 16

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of twenty members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination

Note by the Secretary-General (A/57/428, A/57/428/Add.1)

The President: Pursuant to General Assembly decision 42/450 of 17 December 1987, the Assembly elects the members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination upon their nomination by the Economic and Social Council.

The Assembly has before it document A/57/428 and addendum 1, which contains the nominations by the Economic and Social Council to fill the vacancies in the Committee that will occur as a result of the expiration, on 31 December 2002, of the terms of office of Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cameroon, Cuba, Gabon, Germany, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Mauritania, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, San Marino, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Zimbabwe.

Those States are eligible for immediate re-election.

I should like to remind members that, after 1 January 2003, the following States will still be members of the Committee: the Bahamas, Botswana, China, Ethiopia, France, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Tunisia, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States of America and Uruguay.

Therefore, those 14 States are not eligible in this election.

I should now like to inform members that the following States have been nominated by the Economic and Social Council: the four African States for four vacancies are Benin, the Central African Republic, Gabon and South Africa; the four Asian States for four vacancies are India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan; the three Eastern European States for three vacancies are Armenia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine; the four Latin American and Caribbean States for four vacancies are Argentina, Brazil, Cuba and Nicaragua; and the four Western European and other States for five vacancies are Germany, Monaco, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, all elections should be held by secret ballot, and there shall be no nominations. However, I should like to recall paragraph 16 of General Assembly decision 34/401, whereby the practice of dispensing with the secret ballot for elections to subsidiary organs when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled should become standard, unless a delegation specifically requests a vote on a given election.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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In the absence of such a request, may I take it that the Assembly decides to proceed to the election on that basis?

It was so decided.

The President: The number of States nominated from among the African States, the Asian States, the Eastern European States, the Latin American and Caribbean States and the Western European and other States is equal to, or does not exceed, the number of seats to be filled in each of those groups.

May I therefore take it that the Assembly wishes to declare those States nominated by the Economic and Social Council from among the African States, the Asian States, the Eastern European States, the Latin American and Caribbean States and the Western European and other States, namely Argentina, Armenia, Benin, Brazil, the Central African Republic, Cuba, Gabon, Germany, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Monaco, Nicaragua, Pakistan, the Republic of Moldova, South Africa, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, elected members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2003?

It was so decided.

The President: I congratulate the 19 States that have been elected members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

Regarding the remaining vacancy from among the Western European and other States, the General Assembly will be in a position to act on it upon the nomination by the Economic and Social Council of a Member State from that region.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 16.

Agenda item 24

Culture of peace

Note by the Secretary-General (A/57/186 and Add.1)

Draft resolutions (A/57/L.9/Rev.1 and A/57/L.12)

The President: The note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has been circulated in document A/57/186 and addendum 1.

I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.9.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Mr. President, once again I should like to put on record my delegation's appreciation of your excellent leadership of this Assembly through your prodigious wisdom, knowledge and skill. My delegation is committed to working closely with you and other delegations to ensure that the current Assembly session reaches the fruitful conclusion to which we all aspire.

I now have the pleasure and the honour to present to the Assembly draft resolution A/57/L.9, entitled "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010", under agenda item 24, Culture of peace. Traditionally, this draft resolution has been tabled by Bangladesh and co-sponsored by a large number of countries from all parts of the world.

In addition to the list of sponsors that has been provided in the draft resolution this time around, Morocco and Venezuela have also signed up. The list is still available; it is with the Secretariat at the side of this Hall; and we would welcome others who may wish to join us.

I hope that all delegations have had a chance to examine the draft resolution. There is very little that is new in the present formulation. Basically, we have followed the usual pattern of recalling relevant previous resolutions, noting significant new developments over the last year, commending Member countries, the United Nations system, organizations and civil society for their work in the area of culture of peace and calling on them to further strengthen their activities.

We have also recognized the very important work being done by the United Nations system and the international community in the fields of peacekeeping, peace-building, conflict prevention, disarmament, sustainable development, promotion of human dignity and human rights, democracy, the rule of law and good governance at all levels. These contribute greatly to the promotion of the culture of peace.

Over several sessions of informal consultations, an agreed text has been achieved among participants from over 50 countries, representing different groups and shades of opinion. The agreed text was circulated by the Secretariat this morning as document A/57/L.9/Rev.1.

Of particular note is the reference in operative paragraph 11 to the decision contained in operative paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 55/47 that one day of plenary meetings should be devoted during the sixtieth session of the Assembly to considering the item. While emphasizing the significance of these planned meetings in marking the halfway point in the observance of the Decade and calling for high-level participation, the Assembly is called upon to consider, at an appropriate time, the possibility of organizing these meetings as close as possible to the general debate.

There is also a new operative paragraph 5, which calls on the appropriate authorities to provide education in children's schools that includes lessons in mutual understanding, tolerance, active citizenship, human rights and the promotion of the culture of peace.

I hope that this Assembly will adopt the draft resolution by consensus, as it has done in the past, as a reflection of what we believe are the aspirations of humanity in our contemporary times.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of El Salvador, who will speak on behalf of the Central American countries and the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Lagos Pizzati (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is pleased to be able to participate in the debate on agenda item 24, entitled "Culture of peace", on behalf of the countries members of the Central American Group and of the Dominican Republic. Consideration of this item is particularly relevant today, at a time when the international community is facing a tense and difficult conflict situation, and also because of the potentially negative consequences of abandoning collective action as a means of promoting and maintaining international peace and security. A culture of peace is today more important than ever.

In fact, as a result of the attacks of 11 September 2001 and of the other terrorist acts which have given rise to a worldwide fight against terrorism, the international political situation has deteriorated, threatening multilateral mechanisms for the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security and thus running the risk of bringing about serious political, economic and social destabilization in the entire Middle East region, which undeniably would eventually affect the entire world.

Efforts to give new impetus to and urgently and actively promote the consolidation of a culture of peace are thus essential at this time.

Given that the General Assembly has declared the period 2001-2010 as the International Decade for the Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World, we now have an invaluable opportunity to convey a message of hope to our peoples, despite the adverse circumstances that threaten to make violence more widespread and extensive as an accepted — though undesirable — part of daily life.

As is well known, the culture of peace represents above all a general effort to change ways of thinking and attitudes with a view to promoting peace. It means transforming and preventing conflicts so as to ensure that they do not lead to further violence and re-establishing peace and trust among our citizens.

In this regard, the countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic share the view that a culture of peace must be built up day by day. That is why our Governments believe that adopting values and attitudes that promote peace is first and foremost a personal decision, but that it becomes more significant when expressed collectively. The will to establish a dialogue, to share, to express solidarity, to listen to the views and accept the ideas of others — even though one might not agree with them — and to be understanding and tolerant, must come from within, as the result of personal reflection about how to be a peace-builder, before taking root in the collective conscience of our peoples.

In this respect, the International Year for the Culture of Peace, commemorated in 2000, provided an excellent opportunity for the promotion of a personal, collective and institutional attitude adjustment. This manifested itself in a number of activities carried out by civil society, Governments, the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders interested in actively promoting a culture of peace.

It is also important to emphasize that the desire for peace is one that is universally recognized. It has been expressed and demonstrated throughout history, in documents and activities that are deeply rooted in human culture.

Peace, as a human aspiration and need, does not only mean a reduction in all types of violence, whether direct, structural or cultural. It is also an indispensable precondition for the creative and non-violent transformation of conflict in a way that contributes to peace-building, to the extent that we are capable of changing conflict into cooperation, positively and creatively acknowledging our opponents by means of dialogue.

In this respect, it is important to note that peace is multidimensional and therefore calls for efforts to be made to achieve not only disarmament but true human development and to consolidate respect for human rights, resolve conflict and put an end to environmental degradation.

The countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic share the view that the right of human beings to live in peace is the cornerstone for all other rights. Peace being a human right, it behoves all of us to be peace-builders. To contribute to the building of a new vision of peace through the development of a culture of peace based on the universal values of democracy, respect for life, freedom, justice, solidarity, tolerance, human rights and equality between men and women is thus one of the most important tasks and challenges of our times.

It is the responsibility of all to become aware of the common destiny of humankind so as to promote the implementation of common policies to guarantee justice in relations among human beings, as well as support harmonious relationships between humankind and the environment and among States.

It is thus more important than ever today to build peace through science, culture, education, communication and solidarity, so as to effectively face up to the challenges of exclusion, discrimination, intolerance and violence, which threaten the cohesion of societies and inevitably lead to armed conflict.

I would like to conclude by reiterating the invitation of the countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic to join together in building and consolidating a culture of peace. Now is the time to transform a culture of confrontation and violence into a culture of peace.

Ms. Khakamada (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I am speaking to the General Assembly today on behalf of the delegation of the Russian Federation in my capacity as Deputy Chairperson of the State Duma of the Russian Federation and as one of the leaders of the Democratic Party in Russia. Furthermore, I was one of the people who personally communicated and negotiated with the terrorists who recently took more than 700 people hostage in the centre of Moscow. For that reason, my words today may seem harsh: I am not only aware of the new challenges to international security, but have actually looked them in the face. For me and for all those who have suffered from terrorist acts, the question of the culture of peace is not just empty words.

After 11 September 2001, it was generally admitted that the world had changed, but only now has the global crisis of foreign policy thinking become apparent. It is now clear that, in the 10 years since the break-up of the Soviet Union, the world's developed countries, headed by the United States, were preparing for illusory challenges and were thus unprepared to face the real threats.

When, following the tragedy in New York, emotions abated, it was clear that the crisis of decision-making on security policies had itself become one of the principal threats to the world today. It has even been said that conventional thinking on foreign policy has been revived. The question therefore arises as to whether there is a place for the culture of peace in modern politics. Can we speak about a compatibility between war — that is, the war against terrorism — and the culture of peace?

Many Western leaders have decided that peace enforcement is the most effective way to maintain security. If that idea is accepted, however, the emergence of quasi-colonialism is almost inevitable and will have unpredictable consequences.

Nobody would argue that it is not necessary to take prompt coercive measures against terrorist organizations and the financial structures that support them. But it is important in that respect to ensure that we have the information that we need in order to prevent acts of terrorism, since preventing them is much easier than dealing with their tragic consequences after they have claimed civilian victims.

It would be dangerous, however, to draw parallels between terror and the peculiarities of a given political regime.

After all, political dictatorship and terrorism are two different things, no matter how we regard them. That distinction is needed in order to block ideological support for international terrorism. Terrorism must not be associated with any particular State, nationality or religion. Terrorists should be considered worldwide as outlaws who exist independently of any political regime. Otherwise, international terrorism will use inter-ethnic and religious conflict as an ideological basis for its action aimed at breaking down civilization and will thereby gain additional resources. I believe it is necessary to effect radical and immediate reforms of the United Nations right away, rather than to think in terms of the clash of civilizations, which makes the international security system even more vulnerable.

On the other hand, we cannot accuse Western countries of pursuing a one-sided power policy. For them, the ideals of freedom and democracy do not sound a hollow note but are an actual integral part of their policies aimed at spreading the ideals of human rights and human values. At the same time, we cannot replace the struggle for human values with the struggle for national interests or to confuse national interests with the basic principles of international security.

We believe that, in these conditions, the world community needs to react much quicker. I think that there is no time for delay or for long-drawn-out decisions. Disproportionate response on the part of world terrorism is possible, and the threat of such a response remains. Such a situation is further complicated by the fact that the United Nations is losing its importance as a mechanism for making key political decisions.

In order to effectively cope with emerging challenges, it is necessary to improve the functioning of the United Nations institutions by adapting them to current realities. One way to do this, we believe, is to increase the number of permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, while investing it with wider or, if necessary, extraordinary powers in order to combat international extremism.

As a criterion for increasing membership, we have to consider the material, economic, political and human authority of the candidate countries within the context of the new challenges to international security. Moreover — and this is directed related to today's agenda item on culture and peace — the new agenda will have to give some thought as to what kind of a generation will be taking over and what they will come with. If they adopt the stereotypes of traditional political thinking, this would maintain the threat to the future of humankind. We cannot allow the existing political elite simply to reproduce itself and its own recipes for addressing political issues. Along with these recipes, terrorism will also be reproduced as a method of political struggle, only in a purer form, since the bipolar division of the world that held the current political elite in check no longer exists.

Therefore, it is the new generation that should become the main focus of attention with regard to a culture of peace. However paradoxical, this is a requirement for today, rather than for tomorrow. A new culture of peace in a new world and new times needs new ideas and new people. Therefore, let us try to combine our efforts today in order to combat new threats, and let us give further thought to how the United Nations, which brings together all cultures and all civilizations, can resist the new threats.

Mr. Moushoutas (Cyprus): Given the state of world affairs as we observe the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, one cannot but think how necessary and timely the culture of peace appears today.

We would like to extend our appreciation to the delegation of Bangladesh for inscribing this item on our agenda and for introducing draft resolution A/57/L.9, which has our full support.

Governments of States Parties to the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declare in the preamble "That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed". How true that is. We need to cultivate peace. Education contributes to knowledge and correct views. The question is one of whether education alone builds peace among men and nations.

Knowledge alone may lack the necessary elements to bring about peace. We must strive through spiritual uplifting to impute a sense of brotherhood and love among people. We are taught to love our neighbours as ourselves. Blessed be the peacemakers, is another of the lessons we are taught. The family,

schools and places of worship are inseparable sine qua non ingredients in making a contribution to the building of a peaceful world. Of cardinal importance is the need to respect diversity, other religions and cultures. The beauty of integration and of unity in diversity must be inculcated and cultivated in our children's minds if we are to realize the objective and essence of a culture of peace.

The item entitled "Dialogue among civilizations", which was inscribed in the agenda of the General Assembly by the President of Iran and which has been debated in this Hall for the past few years, aims at advancing understanding and tolerance and contributes to peaceful symbiosis in diversity. Diversity must be made to be seen for what it is — a part of a beautiful mosaic, not as a pretext for segregation among peoples and separatist movements. We have expanded our horizons and are continuously making strides in scientific knowledge. We have reached other parts of the cosmos. We have become, or should believe that we have become, a global village. At the same time, however, we are paradoxically experiencing partitions, divisions and violent separatist extremist movements. It is obvious that advances in science have not brought about peace. We still live in a state of conflict and terror. Knowledge has not brought about the much-desired result.

We have identified the causes of conflict in underdevelopment, poverty and oppression. We have tried to reverse the use of force in favour of dialogue by creating the United Nations, but we have had limited success. We still have a long and arduous way to go. Why? We believe that the answer lies in the fact that peace cannot exist without justice, which is the most substantive element of peace and one that is inseparably connected to it. Peace cannot thrive in a State without the presence of political, economic and social justice.

Irrespective of the grave difficulties that we face in this lofty endeavour of establishing a culture of peace, we owe it to our children to strive for a just world, a tolerant world, a world of brotherhood and diversity where justice prevails and the provisions of the United Nations Charter are indeed imbedded in their young minds and hearts.

Mr. Atta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report entitled "International Decade of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World" (A/57/186), which contains a full description of the efforts made to implement the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. I would also like to commend the efforts made by Member States and the agencies of the United Nations system, in particular those of UNESCO and the United Nation's Children's Fund (UNICEF). We wish to emphasize the importance of civil society's active participation in establishing the concept of the culture of peace.

The culture of peace is a very complex process characterized by various phases, objectives and means at every stage. We must first define what peace is so that it may be just and lasting. Thereafter, one of the most difficult stages is to agree to peace and to implement it, which is a test of our true belief in peace. After that, we will reach the stage we are all working towards, namely, the prevalence of a culture of peace and peaceful co-existence among future generations.

The Middle East, more than any other region, is in need of a culture of peace. The continuous cycle of violence and counter-violence prevailing in the Palestinian territories has led to the disappearance of hopes for peace, a phenomenon that accelerated in the course of the 1990s. We must also not forget that Palestinians are an occupied people who suffer daily from the practices of the Israeli occupying force. They are in fact living under siege and are being confronted with the threat of land confiscation. In fact, they are living under threat to their lives. In addition, Palestinians are also deprived of appropriate education and health care, which are the only means of developing human resources. That means that the future of Palestinian children is being buried alive.

As we speak of a culture of peace for children, I would like to refer to the conclusions recently reached by the Committee on the Rights of the Child with regard to the conditions of the rights of Palestinian children living under occupation.

First, the Committee has indicated its serious concern about the lack of information regarding the condition of children in occupied Palestinian territories. The Committee is also concerned about discrimination in the legal definition of an Israeli child, who is a person under 18 years of age. Under Israeli military order 132, a Palestinian child is a person under 16 years of age. The Committee has advised the Israeli

Government to ensure that its law conforms to articles I and II of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Secondly, the Committee expressed its serious concern at complaints of Palestinian children tortured by Israeli police at detention centres. The Committee also recommended that the Israeli Government should investigate and prosecute every case of torture and provide compensation if such torture were proved. Thirdly, the Committee has expressed its serious concern about the serious deterioration of health care in the Palestinian territories, and has recommended that every Palestinian receive health care. Fourthly, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has recommended that the Israeli Government commit fully to international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, refrain from demolishing houses and provide requisite compensation to victims.

My country calls on the forces for peace in Israel to entrench the culture of peace and to break the cycle of violence and counter-violence stemming from the practices of the Israeli occupying forces in the occupied Arab territories.

The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization stipulates in its preamble that culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs. The Declaration emphasizes respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue, understanding and mutual trust as a means of establishing international peace and security. We would like to point out that religion is one of the main elements on which cultural diversity is based. It should be regarded as a means of promoting cultural dialogue in a common international endeavour, and should not be used to foment political confrontation or ideological conflict.

We express our serious concern at the use of religion as a basis for discrimination and at the lack of tolerance and mutual understanding among individuals. This destroys human rights and fundamental freedoms and obstructs the spread of a culture of peace.

Mr. Andrabi (Pakistan): The past century was marred by conflicting ideologies and by the glorification of might and its ruthless application. Twice mankind was plunged into world wars. The ensuing suffering and destruction constituted an affront to the basic canons of humanity. As time progressed, peoples and States devised, refined and perfected mechanisms and instruments to help mankind create better social environments and conditions. The Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were the cardinal instruments that evolved and introduced the fundamental values of humankind: freedom, equality, justice and tolerance.

The end of the cold war unfolded possibilities for a new world order based on those fundamental values of mankind. The Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, adopted on 13 September 1999, inspired adherence to the principles of freedom, tolerance, cooperation, pluralism, cultural diversity, dialogue and understanding at all levels of society and among all nations. The concept of a culture of peace is enshrined in the Charter. Article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights calls for a world in which all rights are fully realized. That article pronounces that "Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration can be fully realized". The culture of peace is firmly embedded in that article.

The advent of the new millennium gave us fresh hope. But the traumatic events of 11 September 2001 dealt a serious blow to those hopes, intervening in our journey to the envisioned goal. While the international community has shown unity in combating the abominable phenomenon of terrorism, efforts have, regrettably, been under way to pit religion against religion, culture against culture and civilization against civilization. Samuel Huntington's theory of the clash of civilizations is being vigorously pursued by certain interested quarters.

No doubt, the winds that have blown across the globe since the terrorist attacks of last year have borne seeds of both clash and cooperation. It is for us to decide which seed to protect and nurture for germination.

The concept of the clash of civilizations was among several paradigms of the shifting character of world politics presented after the end of the cold war. Its author's contention that different civilizations and religions, embodying different world views, will be at the heart of future wars lacks universal acceptability and is antithetical to the concept of the culture of peace. The culture of peace is a more rational and saner

alternative for mankind. It accepts plurality and diversity among cultures and asserts that a harmonious form can emerge through the assimilation and coexistence of different cultures.

Religion and culture are two interrelated strands of any society. The significance of religion stems from the need of a human being to satisfy spiritual needs through specific religious pursuits. Religions hold great potential. They can play an important role in reconciling differences, promoting a universal ethical code and working together to create a climate in which morality and justice prevail. Religion has been a powerful force throughout human history. All religions espouse the dignity of the individual and social justice. Through their teachings, religions affirm the values of tolerance, non-discrimination and respect for human rights. Religious leaders and institutions have often been the impetus for reconciliation and healing within communities where there is tension. Despite that, however, acts of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief are common. Many acts of violence have been committed in the name of religion.

Violence is an affront to human dignity. Peace, on the other hand, is not merely the absence of conflict. The culture of peace is a positive and dynamic process, in which participatory interaction is encouraged and in which conflicts are resolved in a spirit of mutual understanding, harmony and cooperation. Crucial to that process is awareness, knowledge and understanding of the existence of others. The Holy Koran evokes the culture of understanding when it says: "O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other" (*The Holy Koran, XLIX:13*).

Knowing each other is related to the quest for knowledge about different ideologies and cultures. Understanding of one another leads to tolerance, acceptance, respect, harmony and participation, which culminates in a culture of peace.

We appreciate the efforts of the delegation of Bangladesh and other delegations for their positive contribution in realizing culture of peace. We support draft resolution A/57/L.9/Rev.1, on a culture of peace, introduced by Bangladesh.

The Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace encourages Member States to take action to promote a culture of peace at the national level, as well as at the regional and international levels. It also calls upon the United Nations system to strengthen its ongoing efforts in promoting a culture of peace.

Accordingly, it is the intention of the delegation of Pakistan to introduce, during the next few days, under agenda item 24, entitled "Culture of peace", a draft resolution containing a draft declaration on religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation. We are certain that the proposed declaration would contribute to promoting and strengthening a culture of peace in the new millennium.

Mr. Fall (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." This statement, contained in the preamble of the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is the foundation for the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, adopted by the General Assembly three years ago.

Those two cardinal documents will continue to inspire the action of our respective States and Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other actors of civil society, all of which are equally eager to contribute to building the mythical planetary village, that shall reconcile wealthy residential areas and hopeless outlands. Failure to do so will hinder the global community's legitimate aspirations to quietude, well-being and a better future.

Since peace is not merely the absence of war, international action to promote a culture of peace and tolerance cannot be limited to countries in conflict, in situations of potential conflict or in post-conflict situations. As stipulated in article 2 of the Declaration,

> "Progress in the fuller development of a culture of peace comes about through values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life conducive to the promotion of peace among individuals, groups and nations." (*res. 53/243 A*)

Thus, such progress must lead in particular to the promotion of the peaceful settlement of disputes and a culture of crisis prevention; the consolidation of democracy, universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the principles of good governance; the full exercise of peoples of their right to self-determination, especially

those under foreign occupation; and respect for the principles of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States.

The Programme of Action sets out a panoply of measures to strengthen a culture of peace through education, to establish lasting economic and social development, to promote respect for all human rights and gender equality, to favour democratic participation and to guarantee the free flow of information and knowledge.

The report of the Director-General of UNESCO before us for consideration provides a good accounting of the progress made in the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action and of the goals of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010.

Senegal welcomes the many and important initiatives taken by UNESCO and the personal commitment of its Director-General to implementing the agreed strategic goals. In this context, my delegation full adheres to the proposal of the Secretary-General to proclaim 21 September as a day of global ceasefire and non-violence. Senegal also endorses the priority themes of the International Decade for the years 2003, 2004 and 2005, which address respectively participatory communication, the free flow of information and knowledge and respect for human rights and gender equality.

The protection of children must be highlighted, and my delegation welcomes the initiatives of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on education for peace and encourages UNICEF and UNESCO to pursue and step up their cooperation in the implementation of the Programme of Action and the objectives of the Decade.

Senegal is more than ever determined to attach high priority to the dialogue among cultures and civilizations as a vector, vehicle and strategy for consolidating and expanding the bases of a culture of peace and of peace among the different cultures of the world. To that end, we must support the flourishing and complementarity of the very rich cultures of our planet and promote respect for diversity.

Consequently, we remain convinced that globalization must not be equated with cultural homogenization and a uniform pattern of thinking. Globalization, far from being limited exclusively to economics and trade exchanges, must fertilize dialogue and cultural exchanges among individuals, peoples, nations and States, with respect for the cultural, religious and civilizational identities of peoples — all peoples.

In this connection, we must ensure strict respect for international legal human rights instruments, in particular the rights of ethnic, cultural and religious minorities, and intensify the struggle against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, in conformity with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Senegal therefore encourages the United Nations system, and UNESCO in particular, to develop their information and networking assets by providing up-to-date information on the best means of promoting the global movement for a culture of peace.

In this respect, my Government believes that the implementation of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity can contribute broadly to creating a global culture of understanding, tolerance, solidarity and non-violence. In this connection, we believe it to be of the highest importance better to involve the media, schools, universities, non-formal educators and the non-governmental organizations in disseminating that important Declaration and in promoting the social, ethnic and ethical values of peace and non-violence among children and youth.

It is indeed time to disarm history, as the Director-General of UNESCO is fond of recalling, and to move beyond the dialectical relationship between the tyranny of the dogmatic universalism of uniform thinking and the dictatorship of the unmitigated specificity of identity politics. It is high time to pacify history so as to teach our children the history not only of power and warfare, but also and above all of the marvellous conquests of knowledge and culture.

It will thus be clear why I wish to stress the extreme importance that my country, Senegal, attaches to cultural exception, a principle and ethic that must be respected as a sacred duty today more than ever before, when there is a growing and dangerous trend towards the merchandizing of culture and the objectification of cultural products. There is a great danger that, unless we are careful, we may see the transformation of myriad cultures into mere market products or, worse,

the very negation of the essential elements of humankind's cultural patrimony.

The recent summit of the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF), meeting in Beirut on the theme of "dialogue among cultures", drew attention to that trend, which is as pernicious as it is real and consequential. Here at the United Nations, we bear the collective responsibility of meeting the challenge and of ensuring that multilateral trade negotiations in the World Trade Organization take this fundamental fact duly into account.

In this regard, the OIF — which recently chose Mr. Abdou Diouf, former head of State of Senegal, as its leader — proposed the drafting and adoption of an international convention on cultural diversity, which endorses, inter alia, respect for the principle of multilingualism. Such a proposal should be disseminated and widely supported in the interest of preserving and defending the cultures of the world — all the cultures of the world — their synergy and necessary complementarities: in a word, their symbiosis. In an indictment rightfully stigmatizing the steam-rolling globalization of cultures, French President Jacques Chirac wondered "whether the West did not feel it was imposing a dominant culture, essentially materialistic, which is perceived as aggressive since most of mankind encounters and observes it without having access to it."

After all is said and done, and under the influence of recent terrorist events which the world is still copying with, we must do everything to prevent, avert and contain the clash of civilizations that is promoted by the prophets of doom and their allies, by fanaticism of all stripes, by implacable enemies of freedom who in their hideous apocalyptic madness wish to bring about a confrontation of cultures, traditions and religions to pit people against people, culture against culture, and religion against religion. This clash of cultures, beliefs and civilizations can only provoke hatred and chaos, then the crumbling of mankind's cultural heritage, the decline of a culture of peace, mutual understanding and tolerance, and the disintegration of that humanism which, according to UNESCO, is meant to be an ethnical development centred on sharing by all.

First, mankind must be freed and restored to its primordial humanity, made aware of the values of civilization, without ignoring the creative diversity of prior realities and present constraints. We must practice dialogue, exchanges and sharing in all areas, but basically in the area of culture which is the vital source and the ultimate goal of all human activity.

Mankind, situated at the beginning and the end of development, must be everywhere in the progression of cultures towards a "Civilization of the Universe", as noted in the poems of Lépold Sédar Senghor, or in the advent of the "Millennium of Lights" declaimed by Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal.

In a constantly changing globalized world, which loses all its points of reference, Good loses its nobility and Evil loses its horror, spreading insecurity, fear, hostility and confrontation. On this globalized Earth — always one but always divided — between disintegration and reconstruction of a fragmented planet, the universal fight for the sacredness of the supreme values of liberty, justice and peace is indissolubly joined with the crusade/jihad of humanity for a world constantly better.

With all that is beautiful and true in this world, with sublime hopes and idealized illusions, let us dream — but in practical terms and all together — of a peaceful world in which the impulse towards the other to know him better and to know one's self better through him, will allow us to weave an enduring fabric of pan-human solidarity, the *sine qua non* for the redemption of the veritable humanist culture which underlies the much-desired emergence of a new planetary citizenship. A fruitful dialogue of cultures can accomplish this.

The President: In accordance with resolution 48/265 of 24 August 1994, I now call on the Observer of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

Mr. Linati-Bosch (Sovereign Military Order of Malta): Thank you very much, Mr. President, for giving me the floor on behalf of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. This is the first time that I am addressing the General Assembly at its current session. Allow me to add my voice to the congratulations which have preceded me. I have already witnessed the expertise with which you have conducted the debates. I am confident that under your presidency, the present session of this body will set new standards for the quality of its debates.

Culture is a very broad concept. It comprises developing intellectual and moral faculties, especially through education. It supposes an integrated pattern of

human behaviour and, at the same time, customary beliefs, social forms and material trades of a racial, religious or social group.

The first reason for the existence of the United Nations is to maintain peace and security. The Order of Malta commends the efforts of the United Nations to accomplish this aim, but we are aware that we are living in a convulsed and difficult world. There is no peace when armed conflicts exist. There is no peace when violence, ignorance, poverty, genocide and discrimination continue to affect our daily lives.

Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed. That idea from the Preamble of the UNESCO Constitution forms the basis for the concept of a culture of peace. The essence of constructing a culture of peace is the prevention of violence and conflict, both outwardly and in our hearts and minds. We believe that an international society founded on a culture of peace must be based on tolerance, justice and human rights.

In 1999, the General Assembly proclaimed the Declaration on a Culture of Peace (*resolution 53/243*), which stated that Governments, international organizations and civil society may be guided in their activity by provisions of the Declaration to promote and strengthen a culture of peace in the new millennium. Article 1 of the Declaration states that a culture of peace is a set of values, attitudes, traditions and modes of behaviour and ways of life based on respect for life, ending violence and promotion and practice of non-violence through education, dialogue and cooperation. These are the essential principles that must receive special attention in education and awareness-raising on every level.

A culture of peace cannot be considered as a separate notion. On the contrary, it is part of a framework that includes economic and social problems strongly tied to human development. A culture of peace must not be a milestone but a cornerstone of progress and benefit to mankind. Through a culture of peace the world must become even more aware of the importance of values, attitudes and traditions that respect human beings and their rights. Freedom, justice, tolerance and solidarity are values that frame the goal of the total rejection of violence.

The Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace involve the international community in a firm determination to eliminate violence through dialogue. Among the actions to promote international peace and security the Programme of Action includes promoting initiatives in conflict situations such as days of tranquillity to carry out immunization and medicine distribution campaigns, corridors of peace to ensure delivery of humanitarian supplies and sanctuaries of peace to respect the central role of health and medical institutions such as hospitals and clinics. The Order of Malta regards this as a very important clause. Our hospitals and clinics have borne the brunt of war.

We firmly believe that there exists a collective responsibility to uphold human dignity and equality and, indeed, to ensure as far as possible that globalization becomes a positive force for the world's people. Without such joint and broad endeavours, the likelihood of peace is faint and distant.

Development is important to stability but faces formidable obstacles. They include external debt problems, barriers to market access, lack of infrastructure, clean water shortages and diseases. Yes, it is true that war, disease, hunger and death are the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. Today they continue to threaten human progress. Practical measures must be adopted, setting goals that can be brought to realization. Words must be translated into action.

To conclude, allow me to thank the Secretary-General and all Members of the General Assembly for their constructive approach to a culture of peace. The Order of Malta is conscious of its responsibility and wishes to collaborate with the international community to achieve a truly effective culture of peace.

The President: I have been informed that Israel has asked for the right of reply. I give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Schacham (Israel): I would like to reply to the statement made today by the representative of Egypt. I agree fully with my Egyptian colleague's introduction to his statement regarding the importance of achieving signed peace agreements, which remain the best foundation for the development of a culture of peace between two nations that were hitherto in conflict.

That is, indeed, what our two States, Israel and Egypt, have done. Egypt was and is a pioneer among the Arab States in this regard. And its late President, Anwar Sadat, who signed a peace treaty with Israel,

was a true man of courage. Since the signing of that treaty, Israel and Egypt have tried to build upon it. Although our relationship can still be cold at times, the effort made by Egypt to promote peace between Israel and the rest of our Arab neighbours has been unrelenting.

I am therefore puzzled by the rest of the Egyptian representative's statement this morning. The representative of Egypt has, unfortunately, used this vital discussion of a most serious issue to launch an extraneous attack against my country.

The unprecedented and one-sided diatribe by the Egyptian representative refers solely to the situation of one specific group of children and runs contrary to the universal spirit of the two draft resolutions before us. In that connection, Israel welcomed the assessment issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its Recommendations of its thirty-first session that amidst continuing acts of terror, especially the deliberate and indiscriminate targeting and killing of Israeli civilians, including children, by Palestinian suicide bombers, the Committee recognized the climate of fear that persisted and the State party's right to live in peace and security.

Israel also welcomed the Committee's recommendation that other non-State actors fully respect the rights of children and refrain from using or targeting children in the armed conflict. Israel also welcomes the Committee's strong urging that immediate and all necessary measures be taken to end the violence and to ensure that children were not recruited nor participate in the conflict.

Unfortunately, the representative of Egypt completely ignored the cynical abuse of children in the Palestinian campaign of violence and terrorism, the direct participation of Palestinian children in acts of terrorism, including suicide bombings, and the unbridled incitement to violence by the Palestinian educational system and in the official Palestinian media. All those practices have been condemned by the majority of Member States.

The Egyptian statement is also devoid of any reference to the destructive effects that the Palestinian resort to terrorism has had on the Israeli side, which has lost more than 650 civilians, including more than 100 children. Approximately 900 Israeli children have been injured in terrorist attacks. A number of Palestinian terrorist attacks have been deliberately directed at children, including attacks on school buses, discotheques, pizza parlours and other locations where large numbers of children are known to gather.

Unfortunately, the Egyptian statement fails to reflect the fact that the central threat to the well-being of Palestinian children is the terrorists themselves.

In the interest of brevity, I will not exercise again my right of reply on this agenda item.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt in exercise of the right of reply.

Ms. Khalil (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): As the representative of Israel has just said, Egypt was the first in the Middle East to extend the hand of peace to Israel out of its conviction that peace is the only way to settle the dispute in the Middle East. Violence and counter-violence are a direct result of the oppressive Israeli measures and the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory. The only way to break the cycle of violence is the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Palestinian territories in conformity with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Egypt strongly condemns all acts of violence against civilians, whether Israelis or Palestinians. The Government of Israel is ignoring the fact that violence and counter-violence are a direct result of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. The only solution is Israel's complete withdrawal from the Palestinian territories.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/57/L.9/Rev.1, entitled "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010."

Before preceding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become co-sponsors of A/57/L.9/Rev.1: Belarus, Burundi, Dominica, Egypt, Grenada, Honduras and Kuwait.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.9/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/57/L.9/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 57/6).

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 24.

Mr. Hidayat (Indonesia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Agenda item 41 (*continued*)

Final review and appraisal of the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s

(a) Final review and appraisal of the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s

Note by the Secretary-General (A/57/468/Add.1)

Draft resolution (A/57/468/Add.1, para. 3)

The President: The General Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting Part II of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly for the Final Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, circulated in document A/57/468/Add.1.

In that connection, the General Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee in paragraph 3 of the Note.

I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Dumisani Shadrack Kumalo of South Africa, in his capacity as Vice-Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly for the Final Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, who will introduce the draft resolution contained in paragraph 3 of document A/57/468/Add.1.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): On behalf of the African Union, I am honoured to introduce a draft resolution that will establish the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as a framework for future engagement for the international community, including the United Nations, with the African continent. I do so because this draft resolution has its foundation in the African Renaissance, something owned and promoted by Africans themselves. It is an expression of commitment in this draft resolution by all of Africa's partners to ensure a prosperous future for the continent.

The adoption of this draft resolution will ultimately mean that Africa has again given notice before the international community of its commitment to take responsibility for its own future. At the same time, developed partners, including the United Nations system, have indicated their commitment to enter into a partnership that will benefit the continent.

This is the culmination of a process that started in the Economic and Social Council last year when the New African Initiative was first endorsed in the Ministerial Declaration of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. Through the placement of NEPAD at the centre of the international community's commitment to Africa, it has been agreed that the priorities identified by Africans themselves will receive the attention they deserve through the guiding of future partnerships with Africa.

As the Assembly is aware, the African Union was formally established in South Africa to replace the Organization of African Unity in July 2002, providing Africa with a fresh start in facing the new challenges of an ever- changing international order. In a way, the adoption of this draft resolution will also symbolize a new start for the international community in its interaction with Africa. The United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) and the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UNPAAERD) were programmes that had Africa's best interests at heart, but, owing to a variety of reasons, they did not achieve the projected results. The adoption of NEPAD as a f. .mework for interaction with Africa shows that lessons were learned from past failures, that constructive ideals were kept and expanded, that new priorities were identified and that the principles of ownership, accountability and partnership were reaffirmed and accepted. At the same time, the importance of South-South cooperation was highlighted in a spirit of compassion and commitment.

However, caution should be expressed so that we remind ourselves that this draft resolution's success is based on the principle that the root causes of under-development should be addressed in a comprehensive manner. The implementation of the decisions taken at Brussels, Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg is thus of great importance. Africa, therefore, supports the

proposal to establish a structure in the Secretariat to review and report on the support of the United Nations system and of the international community for NEPAD and on the coordinated implementation of summit and conference outcomes as they relate to Africa.

The decision to place on the annual agenda of the General Assembly a single, wide-ranging agenda item, focusing on progress made with regard to implementation and to international support for Africa's development, is also welcomed. In that regard, we are proud to be able to make a positive and practical contribution to the efforts to revitalize the work of the General Assembly by participating in a focused debate on Africa's development.

It is again our plea that all stakeholders in NEPAD — including the private sector and civil society — continue to expand their contribution to ensure that we succeed in improving the quality of life of everyone in Africa. The commitment made by the Group of Eight (G-8) industrialized countries through the adoption of the G-8 Africa Action Plan is welcomed, and it is hoped that the appeal to encourage the G-8's private sectors to invest in Africa will result in enhanced trading, in the transfer of appropriate technology, in the sharing of expertise and in capacity-building, which would ultimately benefit all stakeholders. The importance of market access for African products cannot be overemphasized.

Africa appreciates the fact that there was a positive response to this draft resolution, as it presented the first opportunity for the General Assembly to address African issues since Africa's special needs were recognized at the Millennium Summit some two years ago. While this first effort seems somewhat hesitant, we appreciate the recognition of the particular needs of our continent in the areas of debt, official development assistance, trade, investment and technology transfer, and we are confident that we will be able to build on those in future.

As Chair of the African Union, we have no fear of contradiction in recommitting the continent to the goals of this draft resolution and to future deliberations on the issues contained therein. We particularly look forward to discussing issues in the Economic and Social Council and in the General Assembly, as envisaged in the draft resolution. We will also give our full support to the Adviser for Special Assignments in Africa, and we trust that we can make a positive contribution to the effective functioning of that Office.

Africa will also continue, within its means, to build and strengthen human and institutional capacities at the subregional and regional levels to ensure the successful implementation of NEPAD. As recently as 29 October 2002, our Minister of Finance announced in Parliament that the allowance governing South African corporations' use of South African funds to finance new direct investment in Africa has been increased from $75 million to $200 million. That is only one example of efforts by many African countries to facilitate and increase the participation of their private sectors in Africa's own development.

Finally, Africa is of the opinion that this draft resolution provides a strong base from which African issues can be projected within the General Assembly and its Committees, the Economic and Social Council, United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies and the rest of the international community. We are therefore committed to the success of the draft resolution and will continue to play a constructive role in advancing the ideals of NEPAD, as we owe it to ourselves and those who will come after us.

In conclusion, my delegation congratulates all those delegations that actively and conscientiously participated in ensuring the success of this draft resolution on the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development. I urge all delegations to support the draft resolution that is before us on the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

The Acting President: The assembly will now proceed to take a decision on the draft resolution entitled "Final review and appraisal of the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development", recommended in paragraph 3 of document A/57/468/Add.1.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/7).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 41?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 29

2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, particularly in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/123)

Mr. Atta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Malaria, AIDS and tuberculosis have become major public health challenges; they impede development efforts in many countries. The United Nations, by its resolution 55/284 declared this the Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, particularly in Africa. To be sure, we support the mobilization of every possible effort to combat AIDS, but we need similar efforts to fight malaria, which a World Health Organization (WHO) report indicates is spreading widely and causing severe social and economic damage analogous to that caused by AIDS.

Reports also show that malaria is spreading in more than 100 countries, with 40 per cent of the world's population, over a wide area that extends through Africa, Central and South America, South-East Asia, the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, some European countries and the western Pacific. Among the 300 to 500 million cases, 90 per cent are in Central, East and West Africa. Of the more than 1 million who die annually of malaria, most are children, due to their weak immune systems. It is indeed sad and painful that one child dies of malaria every 30 seconds.

That is painful not just because of the high incidence of malaria among the elderly and children but also because malaria is a disease that can easily be treated if diagnosed early. Providing medicine for treatment to those who cannot afford to buy it, especially in African countries, should be more important than commercial interests. In many African countries malaria is an economic and social problem, not just a health problem. It affects the productivity of individuals and their ability to earn enough to support their families. Studies have shown that some African countries lose 22 per cent of their working hours because of malaria. In some cases, malaria has stricken 25 per cent of the population.

Malaria also prevents children from going to school and thus limits their ability to build their future. It is thus undermining the future as well as the present. Statistics prove that malaria is both a result and a cause of poverty. There is a huge gap between the resources needed to deal with the causes of the disease in developing countries and the material wealth and human resources those countries possess.

WHO estimates that $1 billion should be spent, in addition to what is being spent now, to attain the objectives of the Decade. It is not expected that the gap can be bridged without a sustained increase in official development assistance in the field of health, and without easing the burden of servicing. That would enable countries to free more resources to deal with the diseases that threaten their communities, especially malaria.

I would like to refer here to the important recommendations included in the report of the Secretary-General on this item (A/57/123). The delegation of Egypt supports the Secretary-General's call for increased support for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and for increased bilateral assistance in combating malaria.

If one child dies of malaria every 30 seconds, I call on all Governments, especially the donor community, to do some simple arithmetic and calculate how many died while I was delivering my statement, how many will die as we deliberate on this item and how many will have to die before the international community moves to eradicate this easily treated disease by providing the necessary medicine. All we need is a small fraction of what the world spends every day on armaments and on building up arsenals that will eventually be used — when and against whom no one knows.

Mr. Menan (Togo)(*spoke in French*): During its fifty-fifth session, the General Assembly proclaimed the period 2001-2010, as the Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, particularly in Africa. In many respects, this was a very important decision taken by the international community with a view to seriously addressing one of the crucial health problems that developing countries, unfortunately, continue to face.

In order to achieve this goal, the General Assembly, in resolution 55/284, inter alia, called upon the international community to help those countries where malaria is endemic to improve their national health systems, in order to attain by 2005 a certain number of specific targets, including prompt access to

treatment; a more widespread use of insecticide-treated mosquito nets (ITNs); the prevention of malaria; and an effective combat against that illness, particularly for those most at risk, including pregnant women and children. The fight against the pandemic of malaria is of great urgency in order to reduce people's vulnerability to that sickness.

In his report to the General Assembly on the implementation of the goals of the Decade to Roll Back Malaria, the Secretary-General, after assessing the situation and taking note of the specific actions that have been taken, emphasizes in particular certain priority areas that must be focused on in order to strategically pursue the desired objectives.

While reiterating its appreciation to the Secretary-General for the high quality of his report, the delegation of Togo would like to particularly emphasize the following areas, which we deem of great importance with regard to the strategy that needs to be adopted: awareness-raising among, and the dissemination of information to, the peoples of regions where malaria is endemic; the promotion of partnership at all levels, particularly between the countries of the North and the South; improved procedures and methods for combating malaria; and the mobilization of the necessary financial resources.

Regarding the question of outreach, the Secretary-General has recalled the fact that Africa Malaria Day, which was launched by the Abuja Declaration on the Roll Back Malaria Initiative, is commemorated on 25 April, with a view to supporting the efforts under way and monitoring the progress achieved in efforts to combat malaria in Africa. This year's commemoration provided an opportunity for certain countries in the continent to carry out broad-based activities aimed at, inter alia, combating malaria at the level of the family and promoting and raising awareness of, the use of ITNs. In addition, certain non-governmental organizations and private-sector partners made use of 25 April to hold their own events to promote efforts to combat malaria. This initiative should be welcomed.

Nevertheless, while such one-off activities are necessary to create a promising environment for efforts to combat this disease, we should not lose sight of the fact that awareness-building should be an ongoing process in order to bring about a mindset that considers malaria as an intolerable burden. The tangible progress that has been achieved in certain African countries in the combat against HIV-AIDS through outreach and prevention should encourage us to persevere along these lines.

As far as promoting partnership is concerned, I hardly need to recall the importance of international cooperation in the context of achieving these goals. The launching in 1998 by the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank of the Roll Back Malaria Initiative is a vivid illustration of the viability of such an approach.

It is important, however, that South-South cooperation also be further reinforced. It is essential that the countries of the South that have been successful in the combat against or the eradication of this disease demonstrate greater solidarity vis-à-vis those countries where malaria is still endemic.

Likewise, it is equally important to ensure the participation of the private sector in achieving the goals of the Decade. Partnerships between private companies and Governments could make it possible for Governments to have access, at affordable prices, to new combination anti-malaria therapies that are very effective against drug resistance and also to ITNs, at a lower cost. This type of cooperation could also provide an opportunity for the countries concerned to obtain new technologies for manufacturing ITNs and effective pharmacological products.

Regarding the improvement of ways and means of combating this disease, everything should be done to overcome one of the major difficulties encountered by Africa: drug resistance. Products such as chloroquine, which were very effective and cheap, are no longer so these days because of the resistance developed by disease vectors to these products. It is to be hoped that a new drug called Coartemether, which was recently endorsed by WHO and which is partly derived from Chinese herbs that are particularly effective in the treatment of malaria, will become an alternative solution in future.

As far as mobilizing resources is concerned, the Secretary-General rightly points out in his report that insufficient human and financial resources represent the principal obstacle in the combat against malaria.

In this connection, the delegation of Togo would like to recall that, since the proclamation of the Decade to Roll Back Malaria, the only initiative taken by the international donor community has been the creation of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Because of the broad scope of the Fund, it is to be feared that very few financial resources will be allocated to anti-malaria efforts. Furthermore, according to predictions, only 17 per cent of the contributions sent to the Fund would go to the fight against malaria, whereas 61 per cent and 22 per cent, respectively, would be allocated to HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

It is not the intention of my delegation to bemoan the condescending attitude of our development partners, which, I hardly need recall, should assist the efforts of the developing countries themselves to resolve their particular problems.

After the first year of the Decade to Roll Back Malaria, it is somewhat premature to assess the effects of the actions undertaken on morbidity and mortality rates or to calculate the economic impact on the countries affected. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that it is the duty of the international community to display more active solidarity towards the African countries in order to harmoniously achieve the Decade's objectives.

In this connection, we should not lose sight of the fact that most of the programmes and plans of action that have recently been drawn up by the international community to help to combat poverty in Africa — measures that gave rise to great hope and optimism among the African people — unfortunately have not made it possible to achieve the expected results, as was confirmed by the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, which has been terminated by the General Assembly and replaced by the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Togo sincerely hopes that the international community will do everything in its power to ensure that the Decade to Roll Back Malaria does not meet with a similar fate, and that, above all, it will create conditions that are conducive to reversing this trend.

Mr. Fall (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): My colleague from Togo has just given a very detailed, well-documented and edifying statement. I would like to congratulate him and to associate myself fully with all of his incisive comments. During the few minutes it took to make that statement at least 10 African children died from malaria. That fact demonstrates the importance of the item that we are considering, and which is of particular concern to us.

By proclaiming, through resolution 55/284 of 7 September 2001, the period 2001-2010 as the Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, particularly in Africa, the General Assembly fully acknowledged the true scope of the threat posed by that disease to the development of the countries of the South, particularly those in Africa. Malaria is, in fact, by far the chief cause of mortality in many African countries. Together with tuberculosis and AIDS, it is dangerously compromising the development of our countries, as the very alarming statistics show.

Some 300 million people are affected by malaria every year. As was pointed out earlier, malaria kills one African child every 30 seconds, and 90 per cent of deaths from malaria occur in Africa. In my country, Senegal, malaria is the reason for 30 per cent of all medical consultations and is responsible for a loss of earnings equivalent to 1.3 per cent of our gross domestic product. Malaria is thus an enormous challenge for African countries, which, as the Assembly is aware, are trying to deal with other urgent and important challenges at the same time.

A little more than two weeks ago, researchers from West Africa met in Dakar, Senegal, to define a regional approach to policies to combat malaria and to take stock of the effectiveness of anti-malaria pharmaceuticals in the subregion. That gathering followed a meeting of all the French-speaking African countries to discuss the disease. This demonstrates once again the importance that Senegal attaches to the fight against malaria and to the implementation of the objectives of the Decade, as well as to the Roll Back Malaria Initiative.

We believe that the fight against malaria must not be trivialized or relegated to a second place after the fight against HIV/AIDS. On the contrary, the challenge of rolling back malaria must be met head on, together with that of fighting AIDS.

The absence or inadequacy of infrastructure and resources, the resistance of vectors to pharmaceuticals and insecticides, the inefficacy of prevention strategies, and poverty — the mother of all these ills — are serious obstacles that must be overcome if we wish to achieve the objectives of the Decade, first and foremost

to eradicate malaria. To that we can add the meagre progress achieved in the quest for a vaccine.

The Extraordinary Summit of the Organization of African Unity — now the African Union — held at Abuja, Nigeria, in April 2001, on the fight against AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other endemic diseases in Africa, resulted in the launch of a number of initiatives which deserve further support from the international community. By declaring 25 April to be Africa Malaria Day, and by committing themselves to devoting 15 per cent of their national budgets to health-related expenditure, African countries once again demonstrated their collective political will to meet the crucial challenges of health and development.

The Abuja Declaration emphasized the need to

> "Reduce or waive taxes and tariffs for mosquito nets and materials, insecticides, anti-malarial drugs and other recommended goods and services that are needed for malaria control strategies".

As can be seen from the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/123), Senegal is among the 10 African countries that have taken bold measures to implement that recommendation, with a view to facilitating access to medicine, treatment and preventive care. We therefore believe that it is essential to strongly and solemnly reiterate here the recommendation to undertake the necessary fiscal and customs reforms, with a view in particular to making more widespread the now inadequate use of insecticide-treated mosquito nets, in particular by children and pregnant women.

The partnerships established within the framework of the Roll Back Malaria Initiative have enabled us to make considerable progress in the international fight against malaria. We must consolidate and strengthen it by further involving the private sector, local communities, families, non-governmental organizations, the media and other sectors of society in order to attain the goals of the Decade.

Last but not least, I would like once again to underscore the great importance and urgency of strengthening worldwide campaigns to mobilize resources for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

To this end, Senegal totally subscribes to the five recommendations included in the Secretary-General's report (document A/57/123), and my country requests its endorsement by the Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. President, for your compassion, because by the time I reach the end of my statement, malaria which has affected tens of millions of people, will have mortally terminated the possibilities of dozens of African children who will have succumbed to an affliction that has also stricken their families, their land, their continent. These are children who will not enjoy the presence or affection of their families. The loss of these children will, in turn, be a loss to their country and their continent.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 29.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 29.

Agenda item 30

The role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order

(a) Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/215)

(b) Draft resolution (A/57/L.10)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Guyana to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.10.

Mr. Ishmael (Guyana): It is an honour, on behalf of the sponsors, to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.10 on the role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order.

In doing so, I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to highlight some of the considerations that have led my Government to pursue this initiative in the General Assembly. First of all, we were inspired by a vision of the enormous potential for human development created by the end of the cold war, the accelerated rate of technological development and the deepening interdependence of nations. This confluence of factors led us to believe that it was now opportune for the nations of the world to begin to build a new and enlightened partnership based on mutual respect, democratic governance and popular participation and embodying the rights and obligations of the parties.

Secondly, we have been prompted by the realization that, over the last two decades, there has been a gradual but definite displacement of development from the international policy agenda. This displacement has occurred primarily in the context of two important and interrelated developments — namely, the ideological and political ascendancy of economic neo-liberalism, with its emphasis on the role of the market and the accelerated rate of globalization which has itself been increasingly underpinned by a market liberalizing logic. This has engendered new imbalances in international economic relations and reinforced the patterns of inequality that have prevailed over past decades. The time has now come for the international community to create an alternative vision of development based on a more balanced relationship between the market and the State.

A third factor needs to be taken into account. The indissoluble link between development and peace means that, if the development agenda were to fail, peace would certainly be imperilled and vice versa. With the proliferation of conflict in various parts of the world and the rise of terrorism in recent times, there is a growing preoccupation among developing countries that with the astronomical costs of implementing the agenda for peace and security, the agenda for development will be further starved of resources. Development, in turn, will become a more distant dream for the billions of the world who need it most. We can ill afford to address any one of these challenges at the expense of the other. New approaches are, therefore, needed to ensure that development, peace and security — public goods essential to human survival — are made mutually reinforcing through a greater investment in preventive, rather than enforcement, action. This will require a sensible balance to be struck between these basic purposes of the United Nations.

A fourth area of concern is the threat to democracy that is inherent in the inattention to development. In the socio-economic sphere, for example, the ascendancy of economic liberalism has accentuated inequality at all levels — within countries, both developed and developing — as well as among countries, North and South, East and West. The population living in absolute poverty in both the South and North is increasing. Far from the redistribution of global wealth that animated much of the development discourse in times past, we appear to be faced instead with a redistribution of global poverty. Whereas the number of the world's people living on one dollar a day may be decreasing, we are being told that the ranks of those who subsist on two dollars a day or less are on the rise. Individualism and materialism continue to be extolled at the expense of social and human values. The march of globalization, while bringing unparalleled benefits for some, has at the same time exacted a heavy human toll. Dramatic economic and financial crises punctuate a more mundane reality of creeping marginalization and powerlessness.

And, in the political arena, we cannot help but note that the ascendancy of democracy often means not greater people participation and consensus, but the rule of the powerful and its manipulation of the majority. Democracy is increasingly a cloak for government by oligarchy, often going hand in hand. On the other hand, though often practiced at the national level, the virtues of democracy are still notably absent in the wider community of nations, creating isolationism among the rich, rather than solidarity among humankind. Moreover, the freedoms expected from healthy competition under private enterprise are being rapidly restrained by the controlling hand of powerful conglomerates. Naturally, the proponents of globalization and trade liberalization will argue differently. However, it is now increasingly acknowledged that globalization can no longer remain a rudderless force; it must be managed in the interest of all.

The question may still be asked: why such an initiative when there may already be others with a similar thrust? And indeed, there has been no dearth of plans to pursue development. Ever since its creation in 1945, the United Nations has been labouring, decade upon decade, to devise an international strategy for development, and yet decade upon decade, these painfully negotiated agreements have proved resistant to implementation. Meanwhile, the goal of development continues to elude our grasp.

The historic adoption of the Millennium Declaration, two years ago, signalled new hope for progress in the development agenda and created a framework for renewed efforts towards the achievement of clearly defined goals. Since then, important international conferences have been held on financing for development and sustainable development, among other topics. It is, of course, too soon to judge what the impact of those conferences on

development will be. However, we must grapple with the reality, two years after the Millennium Summit, that the international community as a whole is yet to find a solid footing towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

As we ponder the reasons for our shortcomings, we invariably lament the chronic lack of the two elements that are required for progress, namely, political will and financial resources. The crucial questions of how we develop the necessary political will and how we mobilize the needed resources therefore continue to beset us. Unless these core questions are resolved we can never hope to have a breakthrough in development.

The current divide between Member States in both the philosophy and practice of development can hardly be expected to encourage a common approach to the very difficult challenge of development. Not only is there wide disparity in the economic and social conditions of the developed and developing countries, there is also an equally serious difference in their perspectives on development policy. While we may use the same words to refer to these challenges, we may not often mean the same things. To many, globalization is the prescribed panacea for all economic ills, while others see it as a threat of further marginalization from the global economy. An urgent reconciliation of the widely divergent views of partners on world economic and social issues is a prerequisite for progress in the future. A mere papering over of those differences will ultimately fail the test of implementation.

A second question may be asked: what is the new global human order? What is it all about? This is a fair question that deserves an answer. It is first an honest and serious attempt to find common ground on which future international cooperation can be solidly based and to provide a comprehensive and holistic framework for development. Furthermore, it is not intended to conflict with other initiatives and proposals already in existence and currently being pursued. Rather, it should be considered as a complementary device to facilitate consensus on the actions we must take. Conceivably, it can also serve as a safety valve, if or when, for whatever reason, the established negotiating process flounders or fails.

The new global human order is not merely a philosophical concept, but a practical agenda for development. Among its concrete proposals are a comprehensive and definitive solution to the debt problem; fashioning a new policy on official development assistance; mobilizing new and additional resources; strengthening and, if necessary, reshaping global institutions; developing a more central role for the United Nations in global economic policy making; and reviewing the role of the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization to focus more on human development. Indeed, one of the more interesting proposals of the new global human order is the creation of a modern and enhanced version of the Marshall Plan to assist developing countries to reach the threshold of self-reliant economic development and to be able to enter the global economy.

Let me now come to a third and final question that may be asked. How do we do this? How do we find the political will to energize our efforts to create a new development paradigm for the twenty-first century? My delegation intends to work with others of like mind to explore with development partners the outer limits to which they would wish to go in development cooperation. Such a dialogue could establish the basic terms and conditions of a new partnership and, at the same time, provide a certain degree of predictability and reliability in our cooperation.

There can be no doubt that the best forum for undertaking such reconciliation and consensus-building is the United Nations. As the most representative of international institutions, it is ideally suited to promote agreement among Member States. Moreover, its Secretariat is well equipped to provide the necessary intellectual and technical support to catalyze our efforts. Member States, however, cannot escape the responsibility for determining the uses to which the Organization must be put and for deciding how it should be geared to perform those functions. Too often, we make the mistake of trying to shape institutions before agreeing upon what we wish them to do. The result, not surprisingly, is that we often put the cart before the horse.

In conclusion, let me say that the lineaments of the new global human order already exist in the United Nations Charter. We need only to build on that structure to ensure that the Organization works in the practical way that the founders intended.

The draft resolution before us, in underlining the commitment of the international community to achieve

the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, stresses the need for a broad-based consensus for action to secure development and eradicate poverty. It also calls for the further elaboration of the proposal of a new global human order, a call to which we, working with delegations and other partners of like mind, are pledged to respond.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that, since the publication of the draft resolution, the following countries have joined as sponsors: Pakistan, South Africa, Thailand and Venezuela. We wish to express our sincere appreciation to all sponsors for their valuable support, as well as to all partners for the spirit of flexibility and cooperation shown in consultations on the draft resolution.

With those words, I am pleased to commend draft resolution A/57/L.10, on the role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order, for adoption by the General Assembly.

The Acting President: I understand that consultations are continuing on this draft resolution. I therefore wish to inform Member States that action on draft resolution A/57/L.10 will be taken at a later date.

Agenda item 32

Information and communication technologies for development

Summary by the President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly (A/57/280)

Mr. Requeijo Gual (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are living in an era of technological revolution, in which information and communications technologies (ICTs) offer opportunities for countries to have access in real time to all events occurring in the world and to have information on the most recent technological advances.

That reality, however, contrasts against the asymmetry and imbalance produced by the neo-liberal globalization process, in which we are witnessing an increase in the levels of poverty, lack of health and illiteracy. Most of the world population is still living in conditions of poverty and the technological gap between the developed and the developing countries is increasing by leaps and bounds.

Data provided by the International Telecommunications Union show that 62 per cent of all telephone lines are in only 23 developed countries, covering less than 15 per cent of the world population; 84 per cent of all cellular service subscribers, 91 per cent of all fax machines and 97 per cent of all Internet servers are located in developed countries. Those figures are alarming. In Africa alone, there are 18 main telephone lines per 1,000 inhabitants, whereas developed countries, which account for 15 per cent of the world population, have 567 lines per 1,000 inhabitants.

The world's developing countries have limited financial resources, which must be devoted to the fight against poverty, malnutrition, lack of health and illiteracy, in order to prioritize economic development. They also lack the essential human and technical resources necessary to have access to the opportunities offered by the technological revolution.

At the General Assembly's June 2002 session devoted to information and communication technologies for development, emphasis was placed on the need for greater international efforts to assist developing countries in participating in this new technological era. The session recognized that, in order to resolve the problem of the technology gap, access to technologies was not enough. There are wider gaps, such as the gap between rich and poor and between urban and rural development, among others.

To be able to develop information and communication technologies, it is necessary first to resolve basic problems, such as access to electricity and basic infrastructure for telephony and the Internet. Official development assistance, which is spoken of so often and implemented so little, cannot be marginalized in this process of informatics globalization; nor can we speak of electronic trade as long as unilateral coercive sanctions are imposed against developing countries that not only cancel out trade opportunities, but also restrict free access to new technologies. It is clear that a radical change is necessary to enable developing countries to be participants in and beneficiaries of this revolution.

Cuba hopes that at the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005, a critical debate will take place from which concrete initiatives and actions will emerge that will enable developing countries to take part in global

technological developments and remove their peoples from poverty and marginalization. It is essential that the international community provide assistance to developing countries in order for them to resolve the obstacles they face, such as lack of infrastructure, education, capacity-building, investment and interconnectivity.

There is a need to establish effective cooperation among all international actors aimed at increasing the effects of information and communication technologies on development, which will enable the transfer of technology to developing countries on a preferential basis, particularly knowledge-based technologies, so that our countries will be able to develop our own human resources.

Cuba has been the victim for more than four decades of an intractable brutal economic trade and financial embargo imposed by the Government of the United States. Despite major limitations in resources, it is carrying out a long-term strategy to introduce information technologies in all sectors of society, giving priority to the social aspects of computerization, so that, with our available limited resources, access to these technologies will be as broad as possible.

The first priority is human resources training, particularly of youth. The establishment of Youth Computer Clubs in all urban and rural areas of the country provides necessary equipment and instructors for free education on informatics to children and adolescents, as well as to the rest of the population who are interested in the subject.

In 2002, 12,074 teachers have been trained to teach computer use in all primary schools of the country. Computers have been installed in all primary and secondary schools, which allows us to develop children's capacities from an early age and prepare them to handle informatics and communications techniques.

In recent months, computer technology schools have also been established in Cuba to train millions of young people in the basic elements of computers and electronics as the necessary basis for dealing with increased informatics applications in all sectors of society, as required by the new era of informatics and communications.

We are still at the dawn of this new era but, unless we correct its present defects from the start, we will continue to speak about digital divides and technological alienation. If we really want humankind to make progress and for all of us to enjoy technological advances, it is necessary to immediately adopt, urgent and effective actions, before it is too late. That is our challenge.

Mr. Cheah Sam Kip (Malaysia): ICTs have revolutionalized the world. They have immense potential and, if properly harnessed, could provide opportunities to developing countries, especially the least developed countries, to create innovative medicine to further develop their countries and catch up with the developed world. Nevertheless, the world quickly realized that ICTs could also widen the gap between the developed and developing countries by creating a digital divide. The Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union recently reported that, while more than 60 per cent of households in the Republic of Korea are enjoying broadband internet connections, there are 61 countries which have less than one internet user for every 100 citizens. The digital divide, if not carefully and promptly addressed, could further marginalize the developing countries. In this regard, the United Nations has an important role in coordinating global efforts to address this gap.

Malaysia welcomes the launching by the Secretary-General on 21 November 2001 of the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force as an enabling factor in the building of a poverty-free world. We hope that the ICT Task Force will catalyse the bridging of the global digital divide and foster digital opportunity that would put ICTs at the service of development for all. Sustainable development on a global scale requires accelerated transfer of knowledge and technology, especially ICTs, to developing countries from developed countries.

It has been almost a year since the establishment of this new body. The third meeting of the ICT Task Force was held recently to review its work for the past year. My delegation is pleased that the ICT Task Force, although only one year old, is proceeding well in carrying out its responsibility to build the digital bridge to the billions of people outside the domain of the digital revolution. We note that the third meeting, inter alia, reaffirmed the validity of a multi-stakeholder approach and agreed to continue to apply ICTs to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, to focus

on Africa and to contribute effectively to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

The holding of the WSIS in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003 and in Tunis in 2005 will be an important event in the history of mankind. One of the purposes of the WSIS is to come up with a vision: an understanding of the information society. ICT, with its warp speed, is changing the international community without our realizing it. Many of us take for granted, for instance, what our personal computer and the Internet can do for us. We only realize its importance when there is a disruption of our local area network or when a malicious virus attacks our personal computer. These are simple analogies, but they clearly illustrate how ICT is affecting our daily lives. The applications of ICTs, such as in e-government, e-medicine and education, would facilitate the implementation of broader social and economic goals, such as the eradication of poverty. As such, it is important that the human race understand this revolution so as to enable us to address the challenges and exploit its opportunities.

Clearly, the greatest challenge is to bridge the digital divide and foster digital opportunity for all mankind. This message was lucidly transmitted at the meeting of the General Assembly devoted to information and communication technologies for development, held on 17 and 18 June 2002 in New York. It is important that this political message be translated resonantly at the WSIS process so as to provide for a resolute and coherent programme of action for implementation by Governments, international institutions and all sectors of civil society to the benefit of all mankind.

The WSIS is the next world gathering that will shape international cooperation at the multilateral level. Genuine international cooperation is essential to ensure real, tangible and sustained transfer of knowledge and ICTs to developing countries. Information represents a powerful tool to enrich and empower all humankind, as a knowledgeable society would generate more benefits for the peoples of the world. Our leaders, at the Millennium Summit, hoped for the right of universal access to information and communication technology. The developed countries must therefore assist the developing countries in their efforts to develop these technologies, as embodied in the Millennium Declaration agreed to by our leaders. The work of the ICT Task Force and the Group of 8 Digital Opportunity Task Force will be critical in this regard. Malaysia looks forward to participating in the second Preparatory Committee meeting for the WSIS in Geneva from 24 March to 4 April 2003.

Knowledge has become a factor for change. The Government of Malaysia, since the early 1990s, has embarked on a quest to transform Malaysians into a knowledge society. In our quest to transform our society to adapt to the information age, we have also realized the importance of bridging the information and digital gap between local communities. The number of Internet users in Malaysia increased four-fold — or 400 per cent — from 1.6 million in 1998 to 6.5 million in 2001. We expect the number to surge to 10 million next year. Nevertheless, what is more critical is to foster the use of the technology so that all segments of society may grasp the opportunities emerging from the information age. Malaysia stands ready to contribute within our capabilities towards promoting international cooperation in the area of information and communication technologies, especially among the developing countries.

The United Nations is well positioned to take a lead role in shaping the global ICT vision for development. In this regard, Malaysia views the holding of the meeting of the General Assembly devoted to information and communication technologies for development, at the initiative of the Republic of Korea, as particularly important and timely. It was the first time that the General Assembly devoted a meeting to the issue and the meeting, among other things, provided political impetus on the need not only to bridge the existing global digital divide, but also to avert further widening of the digital divide. Otherwise, developing countries will be further marginalized in the information age by the globalization wave.

Mr. Escanero (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the introduction of document A/57/280, entitled "Meeting of the General Assembly devoted to information and communication technologies for development — Summary by the President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly".

At that meeting, my delegation noted that information and communication technologies are decisive factors in creating a world economy based on knowledge, which we must build around a new concept

of development with a human face; that there was a need to mobilize these technologies to accelerate growth, increase competitiveness, promote sustainable development, eradicate poverty and its extreme and harmful manifestations, and facilitate effective integration in all countries; and that it was necessary to consider the various aspects and actions to reduce or eliminate obstacles that hinder the participation of developing countries and their broad access to such technologies.

The delegation of Mexico wishes to take this opportunity to reiterate the importance my country attaches to the holding of the World Summit on the Information Society, and consequently to all activities that strengthen the appeal by the international community for this ambitious meeting to take place. We therefore welcome the resolution that has been tabled on this subject in the Second Committee by the delegations of Tunisia and Switzerland.

The resolution emphasizes the activities that have been carried out by the United Nations, the International Telecommunication Union and other international forums in support of the preparatory process leading to the World Summit on the Information Society.

We urge all countries to intensify their work at the international and national levels, and United Nations agencies, inter-governmental organizations and international institutions to step up their cooperation as part of the preparatory process for the Summit, as well as their support for it.

With reference to the operative paragraphs of the above-mentioned resolution, the Mexican delegation wishes to insist on one point that we consider key — cooperation in the preparatory process that would lead to the Summit. My delegation recognizes the specific interest shown by some countries, as well as some international bodies and institutions, to work towards an information society that could become an effective link in the transfer of knowledge and at the same time contribute to the reducing of the development gap among countries.

Mexico notes, however, with concern that these efforts may not be realized in the context of the deliberations taking place in the working sub-groups of the Preparatory Committee in Geneva. We consider it essential for activities and meetings related to the Summit to take place in a framework of complementarity. Thus these initiatives that are no doubt of value may help increase the value-added of the work of the Preparatory Committee, especially in respect to the holding of regional meetings.

In view of the above, the Mexican delegation wishes to invite countries, inter-governmental bodies and international institutions to strengthen the work of the Preparatory Committee for the Summit which will make it possible to make progress in a coordinated, effective and comprehensive manner towards the objectives of the World Summit on the Information Society.

Ms. Viotti (Brazil): Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become one of the main elements of globalization. These new technologies are so important that we have even created a new concept: "information society", to describe all the changes they have brought about. In fact, the spread of ICTs have far-reaching consequences. In that connection Brazil put in place three years ago an information society programme that adopts a multi-sector approach encompassing areas such as education, health, trade and Government.

Given the priority it attaches to this area, Brazil is taking active part in the preparatory process of the World Summit on Information Society to be held in Geneva and Tunis. As an inter-governmental forum of universal composition, the Summit will be well placed to look at the issues from different angles and take decisions whose legitimacy will gain from broad participation. This is especially important, since nowadays many decisions, in particular on policy issues, are taken by forums of limited membership without adequate representation on the part of developing countries.

The economic field is the first to come to mind when we refer to this new concept. ICTs have given rise to innovation and dynamism, reshaping the way we produce goods and services, and trade them. An enterprise can hardly be competitive without the use of ICTs in its activities.

Another important area where ICTs have proved essential is Government. In Brazil, for instance, ICTs have allowed us to improve Government services and strengthen democracy, citizenship and the rule of law. Income tax declarations, for instance, can be made on-line, avoiding cumbersome bureaucratic procedures.

Information on Government procurement can be obtained on the Internet, ensuring transparency.

An even more important example is the use of ICTs in the electoral process. The Brazilian presidential elections, held on October 6 and 27, were conducted entirely through electronic voting, including in the most remote rural areas. This system avoids fraud, strengthens legitimacy and allows for a fast and reliable vote count. In spite of a large electorate of 115 million voters the results were announced shortly after the end of the voting. Moreover, the clarity and simplicity of the electronic system contributed to a reduction of nearly fifty per cent in the number of blank and spoiled votes.

ICTs must also be looked at from a social and cultural perspective. In this regard, our information society programme aims at spreading the use of ICTs to all segments of the population by developing local content, interconnecting libraries and universities, and promoting distance-learning. It is with great satisfaction that we have witnessed, for instance, a sharp increase in the number of Internet users and domain names over the last three years.

ICTs have become such a powerful tool that that can either help narrow the gap between developing and developed countries or further increase the distance between them. This is the great challenge that lies ahead: how can we tap into the potential offered by ICTs?

The answer has both national and international components. At the national level, Governments must put in place public policies that stimulate research into ICTs and disseminate the results of that research. The importance of partnerships between Government, the private sector and universities cannot be overemphasized.

At the international level, cooperation is crucial to bridge the digital divide. Brazil has taken part actively in multilateral forums, such as the Group of 15 and the Rio Group, and followed closely the developments of other initiatives dealing with information technologies, such as the DOT Force. Furthermore, Brazil is a member of the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force since its inception.

The potential for North-South and South-South cooperation is vast and still unexplored. All relevant actors should join efforts to promote, for example, transfer of technology, investment in infrastructure and capacity building. In promoting partnerships, we should also avoid a commercial approach and not lose sight of our development priorities.

The World Summit on the Information Society will give us the opportunity to intensify this cooperation. Although we are aware that ICTs can be looked at from a number of important [illegible] believe that development [illegible] priority of the Summit. If we succeed in pursuing vigorous policies and in setting up strong partnerships, the information society will become not only a concept with which to understand the world we live in but also an instrument to transform this world, making it possible for all countries to quickly advance to new stages of development.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.